



Position Paper on the Role of the Dietitian in the Prevention and Management of Malnutrition in Adults

Malnutrition poses a considerable public health and economic burden across Europe (www.european-nutrition.org). Dietitians, as experts and leaders in human nutrition, are uniquely qualified to develop and implement strategies to prevent, identify and manage malnutrition. They have a key role in the development of policy and guidance, inter-disciplinary working, evidence-based food and nutrition management and nutrition education of carers, health and social care professionals.

Malnutrition* is

- A state in which a deficiency, excess or imbalance of energy and nutrients causes measurable adverse effects on tissue/body function and clinical outcome
- A disease in its own right as well as a risk factor in or consequence of other medical conditions
- Often under-recognised and under-treated but could be prevented/limited
- Expensive, costing Europe around €171 billion a year
- Affects recovery from illness and increases morbidity and mortality (www.european-nutrition.org)

Role of the Dietitian

- In their professional practice, dietitians apply national and international guidelines and use clinical pathways to improve nutritional health.
- With individual clients dietitians take a person-centred approach to diagnose nutritional conditions and identify social problems, assess individual requirements, recommend and monitor appropriate care/ treatment plans and advise on /provide appropriate food to ensure optimal nutrition leading to improved quality of life.
- Dietitians contribute to the prevention of malnutrition through the promotion of screening for those at risk, the provision of education, training, advice and support for carers, health and social care professionals.
- Dietitians are involved in the development of policy and guidelines for the prevention and management of malnutrition at local, national and international levels.
- Dietitians work across all care settings contributing to the nutritional care of people in hospital, residential care and their own homes.
- Dietitians utilise all forms of nutritional therapy from normal food to artificial nutrition and facilitate the transition from one form of therapy to another. The provision of nutritional therapy in an effective and safe manner through the appropriate use of food and prescribing of nutritional supplements has demonstrated substantial cost savings.

EFAD supports the Council of Europe, European Parliament, WHO and European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) initiatives and recommendations to raise awareness of the risks of malnutrition and promote nutritional treatment as a multi-professional issue with a shared responsibility for action.

References

- Council of Europe, Resolution ResAP(2003)3 on food and nutritional care in hospitals 2003.
- Council of Europe. Nutrition in care homes and home care. From recommendations to action. Publishing Editions, 2009
- European Nutrition for Health Alliance www.european-nutrition.org

* Malnutrition – in this paper is taken to mean under nutrition



About The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD)

EFAD was established in 1978 with aims to:

- Promote the development of the dietetic profession
- Develop dietetics on a scientific and professional level in the common interest of the member associations
- Facilitate communication between national dietetic associations and other organisations – professional, educational, and governmental
- Encourage a better nutrition situation for the population of the member countries of Europe.

EFAD's ambitions:

- Realise the contribution that dietitians can make to the improvement of nutritional health in Europe.
- Support the role of all National Dietetic Associations to contribute to the sustainability of economic and social health through influencing decision-makers both locally and in Europe.
- Embed best quality and evidenced-based dietetic practice in Europe through collaboration and partnership
- Promote education and lifelong learning in order to raise and maintain European dietetic standards

Membership of EFAD is open all National Associations of Dietitians from member states of the European Union. EFAD currently has 31 member associations, representing over 30,000 dietitians in 25 European countries.

Definition of a Dietitian:

A dietitian is a person with a qualification in Nutrition & Dietetics recognised by a national authority. The dietitian applies the science of nutrition to the feeding and education of groups of people and individuals in both health and disease.

For further information please visit the web site: www.efad.org

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